

RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER.—ISAIAH 1. 18.

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[NO. 4.

From the Christian Register.

The following extract from Dr. Lardner, shows clearly the estimation in which that learned, pious, and excellent Christian held the *imposition* of creeds, in order to produce *uniformity* of opinion among believers, and the influence they have upon the promotion of true Christianity. His observations are confined to the Nicene creed, which, as it has been the rallying point for the followers of Athanasius ever since the promulgation, and the standard of their orthodoxy, may fairly be taken as the representative of the creeds, which they have unwarrantably endeavoured to impose upon their fellow christians.—As a specimen of the piety and ability of the bishops of the age of the council of Nice, we have the testimony of the worthy Gregory Nazianzen. He declares that,

"The pulpits were filled with illiterate pastors, with mere boys, with imitators of the scribes and Pharisees; that there was no such thing as charity among them, but only acrimony and wrath; that their religion consisted in condemning the irreligion of others, whose behavior they watched, not to reform them, but to defame them; that they blamed or praised persons, not for their bad or good lives, but according to the party to which they belonged, admiring in one what they reviled in another." (Le Clerc after recapitulating these and other particulars, adds, "this is a faithful portrait of the ecclesiastics in the days of Gregory, as the history of those times too plainly shews.")—That the bishops of this century assumed the same anti-christian dominion over their conscience, as the Roman Pontiffs afterwards did, the transactions of the council of Nice are sufficient to evince; which council consisted of nearly 300 prelates, and was held in the presence of Constantine, &c. &c. Their celebrated creed they concluded with anathematizing all "who say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, and that before he was begotten he was not."

Upon this creed, Lardner makes the following very just observations.

"If you make use of any methods, besides those of rational arguments, to induce men to profess and act as you desire, you do what lies in your power, to make them lie and prevaricate. So did the council of Nice. This council introduced authority and force in the church, and the affairs of religion. Or, if authority had been introduced before, it now openly countenanced it, and gave it a further sanction. This way of acting may be supposed to have been the chief cause of the ruin of the christian interest in the east. This, and the like determination of speculative doctrines, and the violent methods by which they were enforced, may be reckoned to have paved the way for Mahometanism more than any thing else. By these means, ignorance and hypocrisy, and tedious rituals, came to take place of honesty, true piety, and undissembled, spiritual, and reasonable worship and devotion. In about 300 years after the ascension of Jesus, without the aid of secular power, or church authority, the christian religion spread over a large part of Asia, Europe, and Africa: and at the accession of Constantine, and convening the council of Nice, it was almost every where, throughout those countries, in a flourishing condition. In the space of another 300 years, or a little more, the beauty of the christian religion was greatly corrupted in a large part of that extent, its glory defaced, and its light almost extinguished.

What can this be so much owing to, as to the determination and transactions of the council of Nice, and the measures then set on foot, and followed in succeeding times? These impositions poison the waters of the sanctuary at the very fountain. They require the *ministers* of Christ, the officers of his church, to subscribe certain articles upon pain of heavy forfeitures: and a subscription to these articles, whether believed or not, gives a right to preferment. If any subscribe what they are not satisfied about, and enter into the service of the church, (which is very likely to happen) they gain and hold their offices by the tenor of hypocrisy. How can religion flourish in this way? Will the persons, who have subscribed (without conviction or against it,) be sincere and upright ever afterwards? Will they, upon all other occasions, speak the truth without fear or favour, who have once solemnly and deliberately prevaricated? And can others entirely confide in them; or can they heartily reverence them, as upright and honest men?"

EXTRACTS

FROM FOSTER'S EXAMINATION OF DR. STRONG'S PUBLICATION, ENTITLED
"THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL MISERY,
RECONCILEABLE WITH THE INFINITE BENEVOLENCE
OF GOD."

"Mr. Strong cannot intend, either from the real or customary meaning of the words used by our Saviour, to prove the never ending punishments of the wicked, or the never ending life of the righteous.—"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." From both the words used to signify the future punishment of the wicked, it seems as though our Saviour really intended to convey his meaning in a manner least liable to be misunderstood. The word *kolasis*, used by our Saviour to express the future punishment of the wicked, properly, and in its most customary meaning, signifies *chastisement*. And the epithet applied to it, *aiōnion*, signifies *of*, or *belonging to, an age, or dispensation*, whether the age or dispensation be long or short.

Grotius, in his rights of war and peace, as I find him quoted by Petitpierre, says, "that the kind of punishment which tends to the improvement of the criminal, is what the philosophers called, among other things, *kolasis* or *chastisement*. Wyttensbach, quoted by the same author, says, "that God, by the infliction of sufferings, has three ends in view; the first of which, is the correction of the offender, in order to his future amendment. And that the Greeks frequently gave to such sufferings the name *kolasmē*. As to *aiōnios*, the derivative of *aiōn*, it cannot signify, naturally, any more than *of*, or *belonging to, an age*; since the substantive *aiōn* signifies *an age*.

The proper translation of the Greek of Matthew xxv. 46, is, "And these shall go away into a state of chastisement; but the righteous into an age of life." And this very well agrees with our Saviour's language elsewhere, and with the language of St. John. We have seen in a forecited text, John v. 28, 29, that all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the son of God, and come forth, "they that have done good to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation." Here, our Saviour says the righteous shall

rise to life, and the wicked to *damnation, or death*. In Mat. it is, the righteous shall go into an *age of life*; and the wicked into an *age or state, or dispensation of chastisement*; the same that St. John means by the *second death*.

Mr. Whiston, in his *Eternity of Hell Torments* considered, p. 21, has these words, "There is no end of reciting more *ordinances or statutes, or grounds*, which were to be *eternal, or everlasting, or to last forever*, in our modern way of interpreting those Greek words: which yet were to last no longer, at the utmost, than the Mosaic economy itself; and have many, very many, of them ceased, or at least have been intermitted above sixteen hundred years together." After so much hath been said and wrote upon the signification of these two words, *aion* and *aionios*, it certainly cannot be necessary for me to proceed to a long detail of examples of the use of these words, in the Old or New Testament. I shall content myself by presenting my reader with a few passages only, in which these words really signify an *age, dispensation, period*, whether of longer or shorter continuance.

In the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, there are many examples of this use of these words. To cite only a few. Gen. vi. 4. "There were giants in the earth in those days, mighty men which were of old, *ap-aionos*;" from eternity, according to our modern rendering. Gen. ix. 16. "And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, *diatekeen aionion*, between God and every living creature." Gen. xvii. 13. "He that is born in thy house, must needs be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant, *eis diatekeen aionion*."

This everlasting covenant of circumcision hath been disused in the church for above seventeen hundred years.

Exod. xii. 24. "And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee, and to thy sons, forever, *eos aionos*." But the passover hath ceased for as long a term as circumcision.

Numb. xxv. 13. "And he, *Phinehas*, shall have it and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, *diatekei ieratias aionia*." But this everlasting covenant of the priesthood is no more, nor hath been for seventeen hundred years. I will cite no more places, they are almost innumerable, in which the Jewish *statutes, ordinances, laws, grants, &c.* are said to be everlasting, according to our rendering of those Greek words, *aion*, and *aionios*, which, yet, have long ceased to be.

A few passages from the New Testament shall suffice. Mat. xxviii. 20. "Lo I am with you alway, even to the end of the world, *tou aionos*; not to the *end of eternity*, but of the gospel age, or dispensation.

Luke xx. 34. "The children of this world, *tou aionos toutou*," not of this eternity, but "of this age, marry and are given in marriage." 1 Cor. i. 20. "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?" *tou aionos toutou, of this age; not of this eternity.* 1 Cor. x. 11. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come:" *toon aionion*; not the *ends of eternity*; but of the *ages*. Gal. i. 4. "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world. *ek tou enestootos aionos poneron*, not from this evil eternity; but from this evil age. There can be no need of my going into a more minute detail of passages in the New Testament, wherein the words *aion* and *aionios* undeniably signify a *limited term, an age, economy, dispensation, or period of continuance*.

I beg leave to cite a passage from Dr. Chauncy, on this subject, of the very unfrequent use the sacred writers have made of the words *eternal*, and *everlasting*, applied to future misery.

Chauncy's *salvation of all men*, p. 259, 260. "Upon

which I cannot help making a pause, before I proceed, to express my surprize to find the sacred writers so sparing in their use of this word *eternal* or *everlasting*, as referring to the *future torments, upon which such vast stress is laid in the present controversy*. I must needs say, I expected, when I began to collect *this part* of the evidence, to set before the reader's view, to have seen the word *everlasting*, connected with the misery of the next state, at least, in *every book* of the New Testament, if not *several times* in each book: Whereas, upon examination, it appears, that by far the *greater part* of the inspired writers have never used the word, nor any other word allied to it in sense and meaning, with reference to the future torments; while those who have used it have very rarely done so. It is used but *thrice* by the Evangelist Matthew; but *once* by the Evangelist Mark, and this in a *special case only*; and but *once* likewise by the Apostle Paul, though his epistles make so considerable a part of the New Testament. It is not to be met with in the gospels either of Luke or John; nor in either of the three epistles of John. It no where occurs in the epistles of Peter or James. And, what is very remarkable, in the account we have of the preaching of the Apostles, from place to place, throughout the world, in the book of Acts, there is a *total silence* as to their ever having used *this word*, or any other importing that the misery of the wicked is *endless, or never ceasing*. All which is very extraordinary, if this is a doctrine of Christianity. For, if it really be so, it is a most important one; and it cannot easily be accounted for, that the inspired writers should have so strangely passed it over with neglect. It might rather have been expected, that they should perpetually have insisted on it, and with great solemnity too, and in a great variety of plain and indisputable terms. And their omissions, upon this head, are a strong presumptive argument, that they knew nothing of this doctrine, which has been so vehemently pleaded for in these latter days."—Dr. Edwards, in his book entitled, *The salvation of all men strictly examined*, speaking of the use of these words, *aion*, and *aionios*, says of *aion* and its reduplications, that "they occur in the New Testament in one hundred and four instances," p. 251. And, in the same p. he goes on to say, "in thirty two of which, it means a temporary duration." We, therefore, find, both by the affirmations of Dr. Chauncy, and the concessions of Dr. Edwards, that the word *aion* does not necessarily signify an endless duration."

We present the following from the "*National Advocate*," that we may expose that intollerant, and arrogant spirit exercised by some of the Clergy, who, although, they profess to be the followers of him who was meek and lowly in heart, nevertheless, pretend to be admitted into the counsels of the Almighty, and undertake to tell us, for what reasons God has done thus and so. The case noted below is not a solitary instance of this impious arrogance which presumes to know the secret counsels, purposes and acts of God. Missionary papers have furnished us with many similar instances of religious fanaticism or clerical impiety, in announcing—"the wonderful judgment of God for sabbath breaking"—"the awful judgment of God for profane swearing," &c. &c.

If these gentlemen have been admitted into the counsels of God, and to the knowledge of the special reasons why sickness, death, &c. happen, they are in duty bound to give us the evidence necessary to convince us they are thus highly favored, that we may profit by the information. For until this done, as things go on in the dispensations of Divine Providence as has been the case from time imme-

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morial, we shall not be disposed to believe them. Has disrespect been shown to the Clergy in Pensacola, that they have been so deadly afflicted with a sweeping disease? also at New Orleans, and other places.

We hope the good sense of community will enable them duly to appreciate this arrogance, and treat with merited contempt those, who professing to be followers of him who said "my kingdom is not of this world" are nevertheless grasping after personal aggrandizement and power.—*Editor.*

PULPIT ELOQUENCE.

Considerable conversation has been produced in this city, from a sermon delivered by a young gentleman of the name of Strong, at the church in Nassau-street, corner of Liberty-street, on Sunday last. (17th inst.) The reverend gentleman, as it is our duty to call him, is said to have referred to the late calamity, with which it pleased Divine Providence to inflict this city, and in the name, and by the authority, of that great Source of mercy, he ventured, as we learn, to decide upon the cause of this afflicting visitation. He ascribed it partly to the conduct of a public meeting, which was unfriendly to the interference of the clergy in temporal concerns; partly to the conduct of merchants, who, in their bargains, endeavoured to overreach each other; partly to what he considered the "perjuries of the custom house;" partly to the nomination of an infidel, instead of a Christian to office; and partly from visiting theatres, and witnessing a mimic of mimics. If we are rightly informed, for we are thankful that we did not hear him, the above were the causes of yellow fever, and any subsequent dispensation of Providence.

Of late, it appears that several reverend gentlemen have assumed a most intimate and familiar acquaintance with the motives, dispensations, and acts of the great Jehovah, the profanity of which makes us shudder. The bold familiarity; the dauntless unblushing manner with which they approach the Throne of Grace; the little awe and reverence exhibited for the Fountain of justice and mercy, are calculated to shock the pious mind. Instead of that meekness and humility, that mildness, tolerance, and forbearance, which are illustrious features in the christian faith, we witness a fury, a denunciation, an excommunicating spirit, worthy only of the darker ages. No longer is heard from the pulpit the silver voice, which preaches "Peace on earth and good will to men;" no longer is the soul subdued by the mild accents of persuasion, the just and natural precepts of a pure faith; no longer is the Divine Majesty of God pictured in soft and affecting colours, calculated to promote confidence and love, with its inspiring awe and humility: on the contrary, the source of all hope and great Architect of the Universe, is pictured in colors dark and revolting; men shudder, tremble and despair, where they should stand erect in the presence of their Maker, supported by hope, faith, and charity.—What is the cause of this sad state of things? It is not so much the fault of the preachers as it is of the congregation; for if the hearers would firmly disown such doctrines, the preacher would gladly yield to their wishes. We could write a volume in proof of the injurious consequences to religion, which results from this intemperate course; but it is unnecessary, the good sense of the people is with us. It is not the course which should be pursued by those who seek to walk in the ways of God and keep His commandments.

There is one fact which is important, and which should be guarded against. *The road to the pulpit is too easy of access.* Young men released from college, deliberate in the choice of a profession, whether they will join the army, the bar, or the pulpit, and their choice is generally regulated by interest; and, if they mount the pulpit, they are too apt to make up a deficiency of sincerity by an intemperate display of zeal.

We now seldom see those heads silvered with the frost of many winters; those furrowed cheeks, which in a long life of practical piety gives force and influence to their doctrines. Instead of the disciplined mind, the chastened, calm, and sedate experience of age, we have the fire, the overweening zeal and intemperance of youth; and such is the influence of the pulpit, that they communicate a portion of this misguided theory to a portion of their auditory.

That part of the Rev. Mr. Strong's discourse which is applicable to us, is stated to be in the following terms:

"I care not a rush for any political creed or *regular nomination*; but what must we think of men, Christian men, of rank and standing in society, who will give their support for any particular office to an INFIDEL! instead of a Christian."

We forgive Mr. Strong for applying the term *infidel* to us, however harsh and undeserved it may be. There was a time when the seed of Abraham broke the idols of paganism, and resolutely stood up for the Onnipotence of the ever living God; and for *four thousand years* have they maintained with constancy the glory of his holy name; and do they now merit the term *infidel* as their reward? We are no *infidels*; we believe in the existence of God; in the law and the prophets; in a future state of rewards and punishments—how are we *infidels*?

In all our writings, in all our conversations, we have never permitted ourselves to say any thing disreputable of the Christian religion. We have respected the religious feelings of others, and claimed the same privilege, as a free citizen, for our own.

Our press has been free for the publication of all religious notices, while other presses have charged for them. We do not therefore profess—we practise.

It is too late, however, for Mr. Strong to apply the term *infidel* to us in relation to a public trust. Infidel as he may consider us, we feel that the duties of the office have been conducted with propriety: and we do hope that our successor will evince a more Christian liberality than we have done, and he shall have for it our warm applause.

May we be more charitable to each other, and annihi-
every narrow prejudice; and may ministers of the gospel
be so enlightened as to comprehend the benign principles
of religion generally...

COMMUNICATIONS.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

Mr. Editor.—Another anniversary, in which we commemorate the birth of the Saviour of the world, is at hand. Those, who believe in his divine mission, and who realize the benefits resulting from it, must feel a spirit of rejoicing, and a desire, to contemplate with becoming solemnity, the circumstance attending the birth—the sufferings—the death—and the resurrection of him, "who gave himself a ransom for all, to testify in due time."

If we derive blessings from the mission of Christ, the extent of those benefits ought to be fully understood, in order, that we may render suitable thanks, and enjoy the solemnities of the season. The Episocpal Church have ever considered the birth day of the redeemer, as one calculated to produce in the heart of the believer, that solemn joy—that holy affection, of gratitude and love, which will bring him with a willing mind to the house of prayer, there to acknowledge the divine mercy and goodness of God, in manifesting his love unto the children of men. Dissenters, from the Episcopal Church, have not thought proper to notice this season with any religious solemnities. For what reason they have neglected to notice the event, I know not, but in my opinion, it is an era that ought to be noticed, an event, which ought to be acknowledged by all, of every name, and denomination who believe in the christian religion.

With what emotions of joy and gratitude, mingled with feelings of devotion, must the heart be filled, while in im-

agination we contemplate the scene related by Luke,— “When the shepherds watching their flocks by night, and viewing the spangled canopy of heaven, beheld on a sudden, a bright appearance in the sky, which approached them with rapid flight. It is the angel of the Lord! The divine glory shines around him! The wondering shepherds view with astonishment the celestial messenger! He beholds their anxiety, and hastens to relieve their troubled minds. With looks which bespeak the affections that dwelt in his heart, the angel broke silence, “fear not;” said he, “for, behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.” To the believer how glorious the intelligence, how interesting the news. What circumstance, appertaining to time, can bear comparison with this? What news, equal to these glad tidings? The christian admits of none. It is indeed glad tidings of great joy; and what adds to the glory, and excellency of these glad tidings, is, that it is “unto all people.” All are concerned in it.—It is for all.

No sooner had the angel delivered his message; than spreading his broad pinions, he gracefully took his flight, to those celestial regions, from whence he came, to bless the world with the joyful news. As he ascended a multitude of the heavenly host met him on the way, and tuned their voices in sweetest harmony to sing an anthem of praise; and thus they sung, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” God’s highest glory was now made manifest in the salvation of the world from Sin. The divine goodness was now displayed in that pardoning mercy, which sent Jesus as the Saviour of the world to lead us to the enjoyment of peace and good will; and to the possession of the hope of life and immortality. While contemplating the birth of the Saviour, and feeling the influence of the holy spirit of love in the heart, we are ready to respond the song of the angels. Well did Dr. Watts express himself on the subject of salvation.

“**SALVATION**, oh the joyful sound
‘Tis pleasure to our ears,
A sovereign balm for every wound
A cordial for our fears.”

To enjoy this anniversary, it is necessary, that we have the fullest confidence in the declaration of the angel, and believe without the shadow of doubt the glad tidings of great joy, which consists in this, “unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Jesus came to save. In order then to be enabled to rejoice, each one must believe for himself, that Jesus came to save him. This is necessary to constitute the message of the angel, “glad tidings of great joy.” That intelligence cannot be good news, or glad tidings, which in no way concerns us. Therefore, for the birth of a Saviour to be glad tidings to all people, he must have come to save all; and it is also necessary that we believe, that he came clothed with ample powers to accomplish the purposes for which he was sent into the world. Short of this, there could be no joy, no glad tidings; solemn gloom must still pervade the mind, and uncertainty be imprinted upon the heart.

While therefore, the birth day of the redeemer has been considered, by some classes of Christians, as an era worthy of commemoration, and they make it the duty of their disciples faithfully to observe the same in religious devotion; it becomes the duty of those, who minister at the alter, to lead the mind into the knowledge of this heavenly truth that,

JESUS IS THE SAVIOUR OF ALL MEN,

to lead us to the manger cradle—that we may learn **MILITARY**; and from thence forward, through the varied scenes of meekness, kindness, sufferings, death, and glorious resurrection, of the once crucified, but now risen and exalted redeemer; who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty on high, having obtained eternal redemption for us—for all mankind,

When therefore, we enter the church decorated with **living GREEN**, as an emblem of immortality and eternal life, and hear the loud swelling notes of the organ, accompanied with animated voices, in melodious strains, calling the mind to the remembrance of that important event which is commemorated in the services of the church, and every feeling of the heart is transfixed as it were by the most solemn sensations; and believe that it was for us the Saviour came, to save us from our sins, to give us eternal life, to reconcile us to God, to give us heavenly peace, and to produce in us good will towards our fellow men. Then, then, indeed, we feel able to celebrate the day, to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and to give glory to God.—Then while we wear the sprig in our bosom, or decorate our rooms as well as our church, if it is not mere parade, and show; we say, behold the emblem of immortality and eternal life.—We believe “God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”—A Saviour was born this day to save us, and all men, from our sins, and to bring us to the enjoyment of holiness, and happiness.

As God requires that those who worship him, should worship in spirit and in truth: while we rejoice, and facilitate each other on the blessings resulting from redeeming love, it is necessary that we enter into a careful examination of the feelings of our hearts, and also of our religious faith, that when we call upon our children and our neighbours to rejoice, we can in sincerity furnish them with cause for rejoicing; saying to our dear little ones, and to all, “Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people,” For unto you a Saviour is born, who is Christ the Lord.

“**HARK**, the herald angels sing,
Glory to their new born king.”

Come let us participate in their joys, and rejoice in the hope of the Glory of God, even the salvation of all men from sin and death.

PHILEMON.

THE MORALITY OF THE GOSPEL; OR THE IMMORAL TENDENCY OF CALVINISM.

NO. 4.

It is impossible to abstract morality from religion, as true religion is only more perfect morality. Christianity is a system of revealed morality, consisting of the duties which we owe to our creator, and to one another, arising from the relations in which man stands to his maker, and to his fellow creatures. And the substance of these duties consists of love in the heart, as we are informed that to love God and our fellow mortals is the fulfilling of the law and the prophets; not that love in the abstract, can comprise the whole duties of man, but it is the source and cause of those duties and where the fountain is pure the streams will also be pure. It is a fundamental principle of christianity that love in the heart is the source and cause of all goodness, that it comprises the substance of the requirements of the law and the gospel, and of all the obligations we owe to one another, and to our creator; that without this, there can be no true religion, or morality, and that all pretensions thereto, is only a hypocritical form of godliness, without the spirit or power thereof. Is there any doubt that this is a fundamental principle of christianity? We have never known it attempted directly to controvert this position, yet as the principle is almost entirely disregarded, and practically rejected, it may not be amiss to advert to some of the proofs of this great principle of christianity, which forms the basis of the system. When a lawyer asked Jesus what he should do to obtain eternal life, he said unto him, what is written in the law; how readest thou? and he said thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul &c, and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him thou hast answered right: Do this and thou shalt live. When asked which was the greatest commandment, Jesus said, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first

and great commandment ; and the second is like unto it ; thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ; upon these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another : for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law, for this thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet ; and if there is any other commandment it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Christ said to his disciples, by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. In the first Epistle of John, it is written, Beloved let us love one another for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God ; he that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. In the 16th verse it is said, God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. In the fifth chapter St. John defines what the love of God is, namely, for this is the love of God that we keep his commandments. Charity is frequently used in the scriptures in the same sense as love, and St. Paul saith, now abideth faith, hope, and charity ; these three, but the greatest of these is charity ; and he often asserts that charity is the greatest of the christian virtues and that without this, all pretensions to religion are but as the sounding brass or tinkling symbol.

If love to God and to our neighbour, is the fundamental principle of Christianity, and the source of the morality of the gospel, it follows, that the only mode of *converting mankind*, or making them religious, is to inspire them with this divine love. This is the essential difference between the morality of the gospel and that of the law ; under the gospel dispensation, piety and goodness are made to consist in *the will*, and all moral and social virtues are the fruits thereof,—they are the clear and fertilizing streams, flowing spontaneously from a pure fountain ; or in other words, the moral duties of the gospel proceed from *love in the heart* ; but under the dispensation of the law, these duties proceed from *fear of punishment*. To attempt to influence the conduct of man, and to make him virtuous and pious by *fear*, is directly opposite to gospel morality. There is nothing new in the idea of inflicting punishment for transgression, or in attempting to deter mankind from sin by holding the rod of chastisement over their heads. This idea is as old as creation, or at least as the first transgression ; it is the great principle of the Mosaic system and of all arbitrary and despotic governments. This is the first and most obvious means of controuling and influencing the conduct of others ; and hence we find that in the most savage and barbarous nations, where civilization has not penetrated the gloom of ignorance, or softened the fierceness and ferocity of the passions, fear is the only principle which is relied upon, or that seems to be known, to restrain and regulate the human conduct. In order to give the more effect to this principle, the most horrid cruelties and tortures are inflicted upon offenders ; the frequent exhibition of which, renders the feelings more hardened and ferocious, and by creating an astonishing fortitude, destroys the tenor of the most cruel and sanguinary punishments. It is well known what heart-rending tortures are inflicted by the aboriginal inhabitants of this country, and the almost incredible fortitude with which they are borne.

So much is the principle of fear, as a restraining motive, the offspring of the human passions in their primitive state of ferocity, that it is generally true that among all the nations of the earth, this principle has prevailed with a degree of rigour, corresponding with the state of civilization and moral improvement. It is a physical principle of our nature, which shews itself in children at a very early age ; it is the law of the strongest. Do this, refrain from that, or suffer such pains and penalties, is the natural dictate of the heart, of every being possessing power, who is not influenced by moral principle. It cannot be necessary to pursue this subject farther, as nothing certainly is more obvious, than that punishment and the fear thereof, are the first and most natural means of attempting to influence and controul

the actions of others. Is this principle then the basis of christianity, and the morality of the gospel ? Was it to inform mankind that pains and punishments, were a means of restraining the vicious, and repressing sin ? Was it to convince them of the efficacy of scourging torture, burning, or the pains of hell, or any other punishment that our Saviour came into the world ? Was it to establish a system of religion and morality founded on the principle of *punishment and fear* ? If so, what is there in christianity to have been revealed or communicated ? If this is the basis of it, it is as old as the human species. Has God revealed a religion, the spirit and basis of which, is, a physical law of our nature, and founded upon the ferocious and violent passions ? What can be more derogatory to the character of God ! What more degrading to christianity ? There was little occasion to make a divine revelation to convince mankind that the scourge or the faggot, would produce bodily pain, or that pain and punishment formed one mode of influencing and controuling the conduct of mankind. Far different from this was the object of revelation. From the texts already noticed and many others, it is apparent, that the piety and morality of the christian system are of a directly opposite character, and founded upon an entirely different basis. It is not *fear*, but *love* which is the spirit of christianity ; it is not a physical but a moral influence which is established by revelation.

Love to God and to our fellow men, then, is the basis of the christian religion and of the morality of the gospel. Love is the fountain from whence all christian virtues flow, and it is this that gives them their excellency and purity. What merit is there even in an action good in itself, which proceeds from *fear of punishment* ? The beneficial consequences of any act do not depend upon the motive of the agent ; but in examining the *merit of the actor*, the motive is the essential thing. If a physician by mistake were to cure his patient, this would afford but little evidence of his skill. Any benevolent act which one person may do for another, solely from fear of being *punished himself* if he did not do it, cannot afford any merit to the actor, although the subject of the action may have the full enjoyment of the act. So he would too, if it had been accidental, or the result of mistake, as in the case supposed of the physician. If on the other hand, a person with the purest and most benevolent intentions should undertake to assist another, yet from some unforeseen contingency, his interference should prove greatly injurious, instead of advantageous to the object of his kindness, it must be admitted notwithstanding, that he is entitled to the same merit in a moral point of view, for his good intentions, as though the result had been fortunate. It is evident therefore that in a moral scale it is the *motive* which constitutes the merit or demerit of every action.

What then is the consequence of adopting *fear* as the principle of religion and morality ? Is it not to destroy both ? Can true religion or morality proceed from a base, selfish and impure motives. If the fountain is impure, will not the streams also be impure ? Religion does not consist in any outward act or deed performed, but in the motive, by which it was done. It consists as we have seen, in love to God and love to man, and the happy fruits of this divine love in the heart. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. If love in the heart constitutes religion, does *fear* also constitute religion ? These two principles are directly opposite, they cannot therefore *both* form the basis of religion and morality, neither can they produce the same fruits. One must be rejected, as false, and the religion built upon it, must be a delusion. We have attempted to shew that one has the authority of scripture for its support, and that the other, not only has not such authority but that it could not have been revealed, as it has always existed, and is founded upon the base passions of the human heart. A religion, the spirit of which is *fear*, is in reality the grossest superstition. If there is no real merit in any of our actions with relation to our fellow creatures, proceeding from so base a motive,

what shall be said of those which relate to our Creator? What kind of religious worship is that which proceeds from fear, and the object of which, is to avoid punishment? God is a spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. But is there any truth or spirit of devotion in the worship of those who prostrate themselves before the altar of a vindictive and angry God, from the impulse of fear, and to avoid punishment? We are told that a *sincere heart* is the only offering acceptable to God. Are prayers and supplications proceeding from selfish, base and servile passions acceptable? Is this the worship which a *christian* owes to his God? or is it the worship of the devotee of superstition to "his grim Idol, smar'd with human blood." What does a father demand of his children? is it obedience proceeding from fear of chastisement? "My son give me thine heart." This is the requirement of every parent who is not himself a savage; obedience, reverence and respect, proceeding from love and filial affection. Does not God then as the common father of us all require the same obedience, homage and reverence of his offspring? the spontaneous offering of a sincere heart, and of divine love and benevolence in the soul.

T.

RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

SATURDAY, Dec. 28, 1822.

PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.

It will be unnecessary, as the reader will have the Bible at hand to which he can refer, to insert at full length the parable which we propose to explain; we shall therefore introduce the several parts of the paragraph in which the subject is contained, as they are wanted in the illustration.

Before we proceed to lay before our readers, our views on this subject; we shall notice the views and opinions of those who differ from us, point out those things which are objectionable, and give our reasons for rejecting their opinions.

It is sometimes said, that the Saviour having explained the parable, no farther illustration is necessary. To this we reply, in our humble opinion the explanation is as much misunderstood as the parable itself could possibly be. In order to make this evident to every candid and reflecting mind, our remarks shall be confined to the explanation itself. The reader will then please to turn to Mat. 13th ch. 37th vs. &c. The 37th vs. reads thus:

"He answered and said unto them, He that sowed the good seed is the Son of man."

But few words are necessary in the explanation of this verse, as all denominations are agreed, that by the "Son of Man" Jesus alluded to himself, as the sower of the good seed. We wish the reader to keep this in mind, as it will be of use to him, as we progress in the examination.

36th first clause—*"The field is the world;"*

What are we to understand, is here meant, by the word "WORLD?" The common opinion is, that by the "world" we are to understand this terrestrial globe which forms the habitation of man. This GLOBE then is the FIELD.

38th vs.—*"The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one."*

39th vs. first clause—*"The enemy that sowed them is the devil."*

By children of the kingdom, we are informed, is meant those who by conversion or regeneration have become the children of God. By children of the wicked one, the unconverted and unregenerated. To this mode of explanation many difficulties present themselves.

FIRST. If by the "WORLD" this globe, or earth is meant as the "field" in which the different seeds are sown; by the good seed, or children of the kingdom, pious, and religious

persons are intended, as the seed sown in this field, and the tares wicked men, also sown in the same field: the one by the "Son of Man" the other by the devil. Then the whole amount of it will be this. The Son of man created, or made one portion of mankind, and the DEVIL made the other.

The reader will no doubt feel somewhat surprised at this assertion, but it is the natural and just conclusion deducible from the above acknowledged premises. Look at it again! The Field, or world, is this Globe or Earth. The seed, MEN. The good seed righteous men. The tares wicked men. Christ, the sower of the good seed. The Devil, the sower of the tares. What then is the conclusion? As above stated, part of mankind are placed in this world by the Son of man; and part by the Devil. Although the friends and advocates of the DEVIL have ascribed to him great power, art, and cunning; yet they have never been willing to acknowledge him as possessed of creative power, or the ability to give life to a single being; this would, indeed, be contrary to the whole tenor of scripture which ascribes to God all creative power, and represents man as the workmanship of the divine hand. "It is he that hath made us" saith David "and not we ourselves, for we are the sheep of his pasture and the workmanship of his hand." Therefore the common opinion of the explanation of this parable is incorrect.

We will, however, notice a few more difficulties, that are in the way. In turning to the parable,—Mat. 13, 25, we read thus:

"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."

Now if we are to consider wheat to mean good men; and tares wicked men. Who are those men, who *slept*, while the enemy was sowing the tares, or wicked men? It appears that it took some time for the seed to spring forth, so that the servants were able to discover that tares were mingled with the wheat. On beholding the tares they were surprised, and asked leave to pull them up, but the answer was, verse 29.

"Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them."

It can require but a moments reflection to see, that if righteous and wicked men are meant by the wheat, and the tares, it would be very easy to root up the one, without injuring the other; but, according to the parable they grow together in such a manner, that one cannot be destroyed, or gathered up before the harvest, without injuring the other.

Another difficulty arises from the common opinion of the day. It is contended that we come into the world totally depraved, without any principle, or degree of goodness in us, that we are born under God's wrath and curse as the descendants of fallen Adam. This being the case, if the tares mean wicked men, we all spring up TARES; there is no wheat, until by a second energy of the spirit of God, men by conversion are changed, from wickedness to righteousness. Allowing this to be the case, it is in direct violation, both of the parable, and the explanation given by the Saviour; for there is nothing said of tares being changed into wheat, but the tares are to be gathered up and burnt in the fire.

To avoid this difficulty some wise divine will perhaps say, that the ELECT are the wheat. The REPROBATES tares. Should we admit this, in avoiding one difficulty, we only run upon another. Did not God make the reprobate as well as the elect? Most certainly. But it is said the enemy that sowed the tares is the devil. Again—if the ELECT are the wheat, they must come into the world wheat. In all periods of their existence they are wheat. Now what necessity for a change, that change so much contended for? What is to undergo the change? Surely not the wheat. There may be a little chaff about the wheat that may need brushing off, but surely not that radical change of nature so much talked about. The ELECT are

by nature wheat, according to their original creation; hence if they meet with a change of nature, it must be a changing of wheat to something else.

We find so many difficulties in the common ideas on this subject, which are not only opposed to the parable itself but also to the whole tenor of the scriptures; and likewise to the doctrines of those who hold to this opinion, that we are compelled to reject them, and to seek for something more satisfactory.

(To be continued.)

"But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."—Mat. v. 44, 45.

It is evident from the divine word that religion consists in the exercise of that generous and liberal spirit which forgives all injuries, and which is ready to return good for evil. Under the Mosaic dispensation an eye was required for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, &c. In referring to these ancient customs, and maxims, the Saviour says—"Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy: But I say unto you love your enemies." Whatever pretensions we make to religion, we cannot be the disciples of Jesus unless we obey his commandments. We are required to love our enemies, and we are told if we do this, we shall be the children of our Father which is in Heaven. Now if the common doctrines of the day are true, and God does really hate his enemies, how can we be considered as his children in doing that, which God will not do.

If God does hate his enemies, there must be some good and just reason for his so doing; and it must be perfectly consistent with his justice and holiness so to do. We then, under the influence of His holy spirit, by which we are assimilated to God, must be under the same just and holy obligation, to hate our enemies, and especially those who are the enemies of God. Jesus then must have introduced a commandment, which if obeyed, would cause a violation of that spirit which is holy, just and good—or at least, of a moral principle which is holy and just,

Reverence for the divine teacher, whom God has sent into the world and who hath declared, that he came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father which sent him, withholds us from admitting for one moment, the idea, that he would enforce any thing not perfectly consistent with the spirit of God. When, therefore, we are informed by Jesus that we ought to love our enemies, and that in so doing we shall be the children of our Father in Heaven, we have the fullest evidence in that declaration that God loves his enemies; (all doctrines to the contrary notwithstanding) and that if we do so we shall act like God, and thus in character be his children. To enforce this duty more fully, the Saviour brings to view the impartial and benevolent dealings of God in the natural system, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

We are also required to pray for them, which despitefully use, and persecute us. The apostle exhorts us to pray lifting up holy hands without wrath or doubting, and he has said, that whatsoever is not of faith is sin. When therefore we are required to pray for those who despitefully use us; it must be in the full belief that it is perfectly consistent with the will of God to grant our petition, and that we are governed by the spirit of God, in offering that petition. The conclusion then, is, God deals in all things towards his creatures as our Saviour has thus required us to do. If this should not be admitted we enquire whether Jesus would require us to do what we had not power to do?—and we ask from whence could man receive that spirit of love and good will, which inclines him to love his enemies.

The many errors in an editorial article headed "*Swear not at all*," in the last number of the "Inquirer" which, in consequence of the absence of the Editor, passed uncorrected, renders it necessary to reprint the two last Paragraphs of that article, in which the principle errors are contained.

"Protestant divines are, to be sure, more modest in their **BULLS** of excommunication; that is as to the language they use; but are as intollerant, and as unmerciful as the Romish church can possible be. They excommunicate without mercy all who will not yield, implicitly to every dogma in their church creed, and whom when excommunicated they consider God will cast of forever and consign to everlasting burning in hell. Our children and youth are led to believe that an excommunicated person will be damned, and this in God's anger. They have the example of those who consider themselves, as the pious and holy ones of the earth—The patterns of Christian meekness and humility; But who, notwithstanding, all this piety and meekness, will excommunicate a person for nothing more than believing that the Almighty is a little more benevolent, merciful and kind, than their creed allowed them to believe: and who, for this, would shut an immortal, never dying soul out of heaven, and from all happiness. How then is it to be expected that our youth will avoid the contamination of evil speaking, when on the sabbath instead of hearing the love of God preached, instead of hearing its melting strains—"In language sweet as angels use" the love and mercy of God; they hear a zealous preacher address his congregation, as though, he were the judge of the whole earth; and declaring what *will be* and what *shall be*; pouring his anathemas upon their devoted, heads, and who hear more damnation, and eternal curses than any thing else.

The apostle hath said, "evil communications corrupt good manners." The influence of example is great. This is to be seen in the general conduct of those, who believe in the horrible doctrine of endless misery let them consider a man an infidel, a reprobate, one whom God will damn, and then see what is their general conduct to that man. Would it require much acuteness of preception to know what is reigning in their hearts, or passing in their minds; or what would be their language if they dared to speak? We think not. It is required of parents to set good examples before their children; while therefore, they exercise an unbecoming, bigotted and cruel spirit, they must expect their children will do so too, and such will be the consequence of every improper, profane expression that they hear. The child will ever endeavour to justify himself in the example of his father. If then we would destroy this evil so much complained of, let us oppose every thing that tends to fix ideas upon the mind, that will break forth in the moment of irritation and anger, and let us cultivate those christian charities and graces which teach us to subdue every improper passion; and ever to pray for blessing on the head of all men."

DEDICATIONS.

On Wednesday the 11th inst. the new Universalist Meeting House in Western, (Ms.) was dedicated to the worship of Almighty God. The services were as follows:—

Select portions of the scriptures were read by Br. J. Flagg.

Introductory, and consecrating Prayer by Br. H. Ballou, of Boston.

Sermon by Br. R. Carrique of Hartford,—Text Rom. x 13th verse.

Concluding prayer by Br. T. Whittemore, of Cambridgeport.

An excellent choir of singers, gave animation to the services; and a numerous audience evinced their satisfaction by the most solemn attention through the whole of the services.

The Meeting-House which has been erected during the

past season by the Universalist Society, in Cambridgeport, was dedicated to the worship of the Supreme God, on Wednesday last.

The services were as follows:

Select portions of Scripture were read by Br. Hosea Ballou, 2d. of Roxbury.

An introductory Anthem was then performed by the choir, whose services on the occasion were duly appreciated by every lover of sacred music.

The Introductory Prayer was offered by Br. Thomas Whittemore.

Dr. Madan's celebrated "Magdalene Ode" was then performed.

Br. Thomas Jones of Gloucester, then offered the consecrating Prayer, which was followed by the singing of a hymn.

Br. Hosea Ballou, of Boston, delivered the Sermon from Deut. xiv. 23, "And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds, and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always."

The concluding Prayer by Br. Jacob Frieze. After which an anthem was performed, and then the benediction closed the services.

The feelings of the society, were highly gratified to behold a numerous assembly present, who evinced by their decorum and attention a deep interest in the services.

In this house simplicity, neatness and elegance are combined, which manifests a true economy in the architect and proprietors. An elegant chandelier, from the glass manufactory, in Cambridge, adds much beauty to the house. The local position of the building, and eligibility of its situation, will render it not only very convenient to those who shall worship there, but a great ornament to Cambridgeport.

ORIGINAL ANECDOTE.

In a town in which there was a great revival of religion, among the Baptists, and Presbyterians, there was as is usual in such cases a great strife, each being desirous of obtaining the greatest number of converts, every art was used to bring the young converts to this church, or to that. In this struggle, a zealous Baptist finding some young persons, who were just brought from natures darkness into the marvelous light of the Gospel, inclined to join the Presbyterian church; hastened to them and used all his influence to bring them to join the Baptists. After many observations he concluded as follows—"Now if you mean to be very happy in heaven, and have an exalted seat, you must join the Baptists for there is as much difference between the happiness of the Baptists and Presbyterians in heaven, as there is between a drop of water and a river."

SELECTED.

Curious instance of superstition and bigotry in Dr. Johnson, and his biographer, Boswell.

He (Johnson) said, 'Sir, the holydays observed by our church are of great use in religion.' It appears, that he generally went to church, and received the sacrament on Good Friday, which he kept so sacredly, that he would not drink milk in his tea, nor so much as look at a proof-sheet of his own works. Yet, he suffered Boswell to come and sit with him for hours, talking about plays and players. One speaking to him against Campbell, he defended him, saying, "Campbell is a good man, a pious man. I am afraid he has not been in the inside of a church for many years. But he never passes a church, without pulling off his hat. This shows, that he has good principles."

Affliction.—One month in the school of affliction will teach us more wisdom, than the grave precepts of Aristotle in seven years.

From the Universalist Magazine.

CHRISTMAS HYMN.

LET all the powers of music join,
In one exalted chorus raise
Loud anthems to the theme divine,
And fill all heaven and earth with praise:

To us is born a Son to reign,
High on a throne of grace divine,
And universal empire gain,
Through ev'ry land and ev'ry clime.

The banners of his grace unsur'd,
Shall lead to victory and peace;
Shall raise from death a sinking world,
Nor shall his spreading glory cease.

A flood of light his path illumes,
And enters ev'ry dark recess;
An all-devouring flame consumes,
And makes each foe his power confess.

In council wonderful and wise,
All human wisdom shall confound,
While death itself before him dies,
And life, and joy, and peace abound.

An everlasting Father kind,
The world shall own his matchless grace,
And ev'ry child of sorrow find
The favour of his rad'ant face.

A mighty God, the prince of peace,
Thrones, powers, dominions to him bend;
And groaning pris'ners find release,
Rebellion now shall have an end.

Let all the powers below, above,
In one harmonious anthem raise
The honours of the God of love,
And fill the universe with praise.

DIED.

Suddenly in Hardwick, (Ms.) on Sunday the 15th inst. Mrs. MARIA ROBBINSON, aged 20 years; consort of Mr. Joseph Robinson, and daughter of Mr. Nathan Ruggles of this City.

In Berlin, (Ct.) MRS. SAXTON, aged 29, consort of Mr. Alva Saxton, and daughter of Capt. Levi Barnes. Thro' a long protracted illness, she found divine consolation in believing in the unlimited goodness of her God; and died rejoicing in the full assurance of FAITH, that her Heavenly Father would in due time, gather together in one all things in Christ.

"The soul, of origin divine,
God's glorious image freed from clay,
In heaven's eternal sphere shall shine,
A star of day!"

The Sun is but a spark of fire,
A transient meteor in the sky;
The Soul, immortal as its sire,
Shall never die."

HERMES.

NOTICE.

REV. R. CARRIGUE, will preach the FIRST and THIRD Sunday in each month in this City, and on the SECOND in Poquonack.

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FOR THE PROPRIETORS.

A FEW RODS SOUTH OF THE LITTLE BRIDGE,
AT ONE DOLLAR PER ANNUM—PAYABLE IN ADVANCE.